

Bible Echo and Signs of the Times,  
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*Bible Echo*

Ellet Joseph Waggoner

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# 1891

## June 15, 1891

**“The Christian a Debtor” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times 6, 12.**

E. J. Waggoner

“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.”*BEST June 15, 1891, par. 1*

The apostle Paul had no sympathy with those who would say, “The world owes me a living.” For such persons he had only the sharpest rebuke. His command was “that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” *2 Thessalonians 3:10*. In the language quoted above, we have the sentiment of the true missionary-one who has given his life to the service of others.*BEST June 15, 1891, par. 2*

But Paul did not take any credit to himself for his labor for others. He considered that he was simply working out a debt. To the Corinthians he wrote: “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel.” *1 Corinthians 9:16*.*BEST June 15, 1891, par. 3*

In the very beginning of his epistle to the Romans, Paul declared himself a servant of Jesus Christ. As we have already learned, this means that he was the life-long bond slave of Christ, yet his service was a willing service of love. He had given himself wholly to Christ, and was so closely identified with him that he was counted as a son and a brother. This is the position of every Christian. “Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price.” *1 Corinthians 6:19, 20*. First of all, then, the Christian owes himself and all that he has to Christ, because Christ has bought him with his own blood.*BEST June 15, 1891, par. 4*

But the fact that we owe ourselves to Christ, and that if we acknowledge that obligation we are to identify ourselves so

completely with him that the service will not be ours but his (1 *Corinthians 15:10*), makes us debtors to all men. For Christ “died for all;” and in carrying out his work for men, he assumed an obligation to all men, although no man had of right any claim upon him. Paul says that although he was in the form of God, he “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.” *Philippians 2:6, 7*. And we are expressly exhorted to have this mind in us. Jesus himself said: “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” *Matthew 20:26-28*. *BEST June 15, 1891, par. 5*

Christ gave his life “for the life of the world” (*John 6:51*); therefore everyone who yields himself to Christ, to become identified with him and his work, becomes, like him, a servant, not alone of the Lord Jesus, but of all for whom he became a servant. In other words, the Christian is Christ’s servant; but as Christ’s work is for the world, he who becomes a sharer of that work must become the servant of the world. Paul felt this to the utmost. He felt that he owed service to everybody that was in need; and so he did. The servant owes his service to the one who pays for it. Christ had bought the service of Paul by the sacrifice of himself; and when Paul recognized that debt to Christ and gave himself to the discharge of it, the Lord turned his service in the direction in which he himself labored. The only way to be a servant of Christ, is to serve those for whom he died. Wesley had some of the same spirit that Paul had, when he said, “The world is my parish.” *BEST June 15, 1891, par. 6*

The second great commandment in the law is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Our neighbor is everyone with whom we come in contact, who is in need. Says Paul: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” *Galatians 6:10*. “As we have opportunity.” That indicates that we are to seek occasion of serving men, and so Paul did. *BEST June 15, 1891, par. 7*

To the Romans Paul said in another place: “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to

edification. For even Christ pleased not himself.” *Romans 15:1-3*. Thus again we learn that the work of Christ is to be the example for us; and he “went about doing good.” *Acts 10:30*. Again Paul says: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” *Galatians 6:2*. *BEST June 15, 1891, par. 8*

The trouble with too many who profess to be followers of Christ is that they do not feel any great sense of obligation. Sometimes they talk about “getting a burden” for the work, but what is that burden? It is nothing else but a sense of the debt which we owe to Christ, and consequently to the world. If a man owes a great deal of money, and has no means with which to pay it, he will necessarily feel as though he had quite a load upon his shoulders—a burden. So all that is necessary to enable a man to have a burden for souls, is for him to realize how much Christ has done for him. *BEST June 15, 1891, par. 9*

The one to whom much is forgiven will love much. Paul felt himself to be the chief of sinners, and so when he felt the pardoning love of God, he felt that he owed much service. And he never forgot how much had been forgiven him, nor how great was his dependence upon God, and so he always felt the burden of debt resting upon him. Those who have felt the burden of their sins, and who know that they are removed, will not have to strive to get a burden for souls. They will feel like Paul, that necessity is laid upon them, and it will be the joy of their lives to discharge that obligation. *BEST June 15, 1891, par. 10*

## July 1, 1891

**“Exposition of 2 *Corinthians* 3:7-11” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times 6, 13.**

E. J. Waggoner

Some stumble over the first clause of 2 *Corinthians* 3:7, “The ministration of death, written and engraven in stones,” but the Scriptures furnish means for the complete exposition of this. Paul cannot mean that the *ministration* was written and engraven in stones, for that would be impossible, because the *ministration* was the service of the priests. Then it must be that he means that death was written and engraven in stones. But some will say, “This makes nonsense of the text.” Let us see. It is very easy to ascertain what was written and engraven in stone. *Exodus* 31:18 says that the Lord “gave to Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.” “And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand. The tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.” *Exodus* 32:15, 16. These two tables were broken, and after Moses had, by the command of the Lord, made two other tables, he said, “And he [the Lord] wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the Lord spake unto you in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly.” *Deuteronomy* 10:4. These texts show that it was the ten commandments, and the ten commandments alone, that were written and engraven in stones; and therefore by the word “death,” in 2 *Corinthians* 3:7, Paul must refer to the ten commandments. *BEST July 1, 1891, par. 1*

But is it allowable to speak of the ten commandments as “death”? Are they death to anybody? The law is the cause of death to every sinner that shall perish, and so by metonymy it is called death. So when Paul describes his conviction as a sinner, he says of the law, “And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.” *Romans* 7:10. We have found, then (1) that the law, which was the basis of the covenant, was death to all, and (2) that

the ministration concerning that violated law offered no relief, but in itself tended to death.*BEST July 1, 1891, par. 2*

Notwithstanding all this, there was a wonderful glory connected with the old covenant and its service. The giving of the law was attended with glory the like of which has never been seen on earth before or since, and will not be until the Lord shall come in the glory of his Father with all his angels. When Moses returned from the mount, his face was so glorified that the people could not look at it; and the glory of the Lord was present in the sanctuary to so great a degree that the priests were forced to obscure it with a cloud of incense, lest they should die.*BEST July 1, 1891, par. 3*

Now let us briefly outline the new covenant. Paul says that this was established upon “better promises.” Its terms are found in *Hebrews 8:8-12*, which reads thus:-*BEST July 1, 1891, par. 4*

“For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”*BEST July 1, 1891, par. 5*

We find here the same condition as in the old covenant,-the people are to obey the law of God. But this covenant is established on “better promises” than the first, in that the Lord promises to forgive their sins, to write the law in their hearts, and to remember their iniquities no more. These things are all accomplished by virtue of Christ, who is the mediator of the new covenant. *Hebrews 8:6; 9:15*. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (*1 John 1:7*), by securing the remission of past sins (*Romans 3:24*,

25), and enabling us to walk in harmony with the law. *Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 13:20, 21.*BEST July 1, 1891, par. 6

The law, then, is the basis of both covenants; hence it could not be done away with the old covenant, else there could be no new covenant. The terms of the new covenant leave no doubt on this point, and Christ's connection with it brings the fact out still more clearly. Thus Christ is the minister of this new covenant (*Hebrews 8:1, 2*) and is now performing the ministration in the true sanctuary in Heaven. *Hebrews 9:24*. His ministration has reference to the law, for he came to save sinners (*1 Timothy 1:15*), and he is offering his blood to save men from sin. *Romans 3:24; 1 John 1:7; Matthew 1:21*. This redemption we get through faith (*Romans 3:24*), and faith establishes the law. *Romans 3:31*. The law itself, having been violated, brings death; Christ redeems us from its curse (*Galatians 3:13*), and thus becomes our life. *Colossians 3:4.*BEST July 1, 1891, par. 7

Now note the contrast between the two covenants: The first had the ministration of death, because everything connected with it tended to death; the violated law was death to the sinner, and the earthly ministration freed no one from that condemnation. The second covenant has the ministration of the Spirit, because "the Lord is that Spirit" (*2 Corinthians 3:17*), and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty and life. *Galatians 6:8*. But although there is no death in the second covenant, there is in the rejection of it, for the law is still death to sinners, and all who are opposed to Christ are sinners, and condemned to death; so Paul says that the letter of the new covenant kills. The reason is that holding the mere letter of the new covenant,-the performance of the gospel ordinances while not receiving Christ in the heart,-is really a rejection of Christ. Of the Lord's Supper, Paul says that he who does not discern the Lord's body, eats and drinks damnation to himself. *1 Corinthians 11:9*. He is in the same condition as though he had never heard of the new covenant. But in every case, whether of the sinner under the old covenant, or of one who rejects the new, it is the law that causes his death.BEST July 1, 1891, par. 8

In the text under consideration Paul contrasts the two ministrations as to glory. If the ministration which could not cleanse from sin, was



glorious, the ministration of the Spirit, which gives freedom from sin, must be more glorious. "If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." And so much more glorious is the ministration of the second covenant than that of the first, that in comparison the first covenant seems to have had no glory. Why the ministration of the second covenant should be so much more glorious than that of the first, is because it is established upon "better promises," and Christ is its minister.*BEST July 1, 1891, par. 9*

"For if that which is done away was glorious, much more than which remaineth is glorious." *2 Corinthians 3:11*. Now what was done away? The answer must be that it is that which was glorious. *Verse 9* states that it was the ministration of condemnation that was glorious. Then it must be the ministration of condemnation that was done away; that which remains is the ministration of the Spirit. By no possibility can *verse 11* be made to refer to the law, because it contrasts something done away with something that remains. And we have found that the law is the basis of both covenants, and therefore it cannot have been done away; but the ministration of the old covenant as well as the covenant itself was done away, as was indicated by the fading glory upon the countenance of Moses. But it needs no abstract reasoning to show that it is the tabernacle service, and that alone, to which the apostle refers in *verse 11* as being "done away," for he says, "if that which is done away was glorious," showing by the "if" that he had before called attention to something glorious; and the only thing which he has so designated in this connection, is the ministration of death. *Verse 7. BEST July 1, 1891, par. 10*

We think that any read who carefully follows this brief exposition will be able to see for himself, on reading *2 Corinthians 3:7-11* that the apostle is simply contrasting the glory of the service of the two covenants, and that the law of God is not under consideration at all, except by an incidental allusion which goes to show its permanent character.*BEST July 1, 1891, par. 11*

## August 1, 1891

**“Intellect Not Sufficient” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times 6, 15.**

E. J. Waggoner

As to the truthfulness of Paul's description of the heathen, in the first chapter of Romans, there can be no question. The testimony of ancient heathen writers themselves confirms it. Licentiousness of every description was not only permitted by the law, but was practiced alike by the common people and philosophers, and was even enjoined upon the people as a religious duty. The temples of the heathen were houses of debauchery. The gods which they manufactured for their worship, as Jupiter and Venus, were simply the reflection of their own evil natures; and since they thus deified the lusts of their own hearts, it was inevitable that they should sink into deeper sin.*BEST August 1, 1891, par. 1*

We often hear it said that the scenes of cruelty and vice that were enacted by the heathen in their worship and in their social life are not possible in this enlightened age; but such persons forget that the civilization of Greece and Rome was fully equal to that of Europe and America, if not superior; yet the people were heathen, and most abominable was their idolatry. But like causes produce like effects. If their unthankful, vain imaginations, because of their great inventions, lifted them up so that they entirely separated themselves from God, and were left to work out the evils that were in their own natures, the same thing will occur now under the same circumstances. The possession of intellectual activity is no safeguard against immortality, when the Giver of that intellect is forgotten. The only guard against the grossest immorality is a humble acknowledgment of God.*BEST August 1, 1891, par. 2*

## September 1, 1891

**“How Righteousness Is Obtained” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times 6, 17.**

E. J. Waggoner

How much of a man's life must be just?-All, every moment; for the just shall live by faith. But by the deeds of the law shall no act be just. This is a hard saying, but one that must be believed, for it is what the Bible says. No deed that we can do can be just by the law only. By faith alone can a man or any act of his be just. The law judges a man by his works, and the law is so inconceivably great that no human act can rise to its height. There must, therefore, be a Mediator through whom justification shall come. And that justification properly belongs to him to whom it is granted by reason of his faith.*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 1*

The heart unrenewed is desperately wicked. Only evil can come from a wicked heart. To bring forth good deeds there must be a good heart, and only a good man can have a good heart. But, as all have sinned and come short, therefore all the deeds of humanity are vitiated.*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 2*

The law itself is the standard of perfect righteousness, but Christ is the truth, the way, and the life. In Christ is the perfect righteousness of the law, and the grace to bestow the gift of his righteousness through faith. And of this the prophets themselves are witnesses, for they preached justification through Christ, by faith.*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 3*

When a man seeks to justify himself by his deeds, he only heaps imperfection upon imperfection, until, like Paul, he counts them all as loss, knowing that there is no righteousness but that which is of Christ by faith.*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 4*

There is but one thing in this world that a man needs, and that is justification-and justification is a fact, not a theory. It is the gospel. That which does not tend to righteousness is of no avail, and not worthy to be preached. Righteousness can only be attained through faith; consequently, all things worthy to be preached must tend to

justification by faith.*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 5*

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” It is well understood that no act of ours can make right that which is past, but it is just as true that we cannot be justified in any present act any more than we can render the past perfect. We need the righteousness of Christ to justify the present just as much as to make perfect the imperfect deeds of the past.*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 6*

In the case of the publican and the Pharisee, the one who put no trust in his own works went down to his own house justified, but he who desired to assume righteousness in himself failed of justification. Everyone can have it who will ask for it, but each must come to the level of all other sinners, and there receive it with the rest, saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 7*

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” What is “redemption”? It is a free gift to us, but it has been paid for. The blood of Christ has paid for it. We are exhorted to consider his greatness, that we may know that although the thing to be done is beyond our comprehension, the power which is to accomplish it is also beyond our knowledge.*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 8*

“To declare his righteousness” for the putting away of our sins. It is he that puts away our sins, and if we but yield ourselves to him, they will be remitted utterly. Christ grants no indulgences, but his righteousness remits the sins that are past, and keeps the heart free from sin in the present, so long as his righteousness fills that heart.*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 9*

Faith is the beginning of all wisdom; it lies at the foundation of all knowledge. The child would never learn anything if it did not believe what it is told. Now, that being so in physical things, why can we not be as reasonable in spiritual things?*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 10*

Redemption comes through the creative power of Christ, and that is why I love to think that he is the Creator of all things; for he who

created the worlds out of nothing, and who upholds all things by the word of his power, can by that same word create in me a clean heart, and preserve that which he has created. To him is all power, and also all glory.*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 11*

"It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good-pleasure." "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law."*BEST September 1, 1891, par. 12*

